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Exploring the Rich Tapestry of Indian Folk Art: From Madhubani paintings to warli Art

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Abstract: *The design and motif that are used to create are highly critical for bringing it to life, various types of designs can be observed in the wall paintings, floor painting and tapestry of rural India. The motif and history of Madhubani and Warli art are almost 3000 years old, and both the art forms show a vivid picture of the culture and traditions of people since ancient times. The present research shows the historical significance of the art forms and the ways they draw inspiration from nature and traditional aesthetics. Madhubani is an ancient form of painting that originated in the Kingdom of Mithila, located in the Madhubani district of Bihar, the art depicts scenes from Hindu mythology, and many real-life practices of the people, on the other hand, Warli originated in the state of Maharashtra. The name Warli comes from the word waral which means a piece of land, the art form is simplistic and figurative at the same time.*

Key Words: Indian Folk Art, Mythology, floor painting, culture and traditions, ancient times, research, historical.

Art and painting have been some of the most ancient forms of expression, Indian folk art originated thousands of years ago, with records from the Mesolithic caves. The art style and paintings have continued to develop in order to become part of the Indian tradition, among the different art forms Madhubani Paintings are some of the most popular ones. In ancient India one of the few forms of entertainment was folk art, these forms were passed down through generations and included music, dancing, puppetry and storytelling. Folk art originated not from professional artists but was isolated (Indian Folk Art, 2023). The art styles are simplistic and easy to understand for the people, their depictions reflect the culture. It can be argued that Indian art and culture have been a melting pot with influences from different traditions passed down and preserved through its heritage and vibrant culture. India has over 50 different traditional folk and tribal arts, and the influence of these can be observed on Indian walls, temples and houses. The present research has focused on two particular folk art forms of India, Madhubani and Warli and their impact on Indian culture.

History and Rich Heritage of Madhubani Paintings Madhubani paintings are directly linked to the folklore and religion of Hinduism, the place of origin of this art form is said to be Mithilia, the birthplace of the fictional character Sita, daughter of King Janak. The Indian mythology mentions that after the marriage with Lord Rama of Ayodhya, King Janak commissioned this art form to commemorate his daughter's wedding (Jashwal, 2021). The growing demand for this art has led to many artists translating their art from paintings to canvases, paper and different fabrics. The art is well known for its vibrant and colourful nature and its depictions of the Hindu mythology and rural lifestyle of India. Around 3000 years ago, this art form emerged for women to decorate their houses, the versatile nature of these paintings allowed women to express their creativity. The art form is traditionally created from natural materials, the pigments and colours used are also derived from plants and minerals.



Figure 1: Madhubani Painting depicting an Elephant

(Source: Medium, 2023)

The method of painting can use both brus (Paper Plane Design, 2023). The combination of different drawings, colours and geometric patterns gives rise to a wide range of different Madhubani art styles, significant to the local cultural practices, some of which are Bharni, Katchni, Tantrik and Gobar. Madhubani paintings have long been part of different

regional customs, ceremonies and festivities across India, the religious and mythical tales in particular are the striking features of the art form and make it popular among the masses. The method and characteristics of the art form are visually pleasing and add to its appeal (Medium, 2023). The art form is highly adaptive, it has absorbed new styles and subjects for generations, welcoming innovation while still to its roots.



Figure 2: Wide Variety of Art Techniques Adopted in Madhubani Paintings
(Source: Medium, 2023)

Madhubani art developed in the Mithilanchal region of Bihar and is an example of traditional art which has remained constant over global recognition in the 20th Century, the art also has a sociological perspective. In a world which is predominantly run by men, females are the only ones who generally indulge in this art form. As it was an integral part of the people and the culture of the region, it has survived due to mothers and daughters sharing it with their future generations. Art became a way of expression for the household women, they were able to gain a voice and share their beliefs through these pieces of art when they were not respected by the society. The art remained unknown to the outside world until the year 1934 (Singh and P. J. Shyju, 2020). When the state of Bihar was struck by a massive earthquake, a British colon W.G. Archer went in to investigate the damage, he was thrilled and excited to see the inner decorations of the houses which were done with Mithilia paintings. When Archer became the over the years. The art form gained traction and colonial officer named South Asia curator at London's Victoria and Albert Museum paintings and helped the art get global recognition.

Madhubani art is a cultural heritage and is part of the cultural identity of the women who come from this region of India. The selection of subject matter is the main focus of art form, traditionally in the ancient times this art form was done on mud walls or soil grounds, they continue to be used on special occasions such as Durga Puja and Diwali, these drawings were temporary and easily removable, the art was able to pass it did not involve any complicated tools or preservation efforts. The artists who practice this art are influenced by nature and their deep devotion to the Indian divine pantheon, different natural elements such as the Sun, Moon, bird in these tapestries. Another individual who has been behind the success of Madhubani art was Pupul Jayakar, the chairperson of Handloom Handicraft Export Corporation (HHEC), she successfully enrolled many women from Rashidpur, Laheriaganj and Harinagar villages in Madhubani to reproduce the art (Rekha, 2010). The commercial reproduction became a huge success with art enthusiasts and gallery owners putting this art up in their exhibitions.



Figure 3: Modern Madhubani Art
(Source: Singh and P. J. Shyju, 2020)

The dawn of modern Madhubani art took place when Western scholars started frequently visiting Mithilia and the international trade of artists, with their influences on the art began to change while still clinging to its roots. These artists changed the traditional ritualistic imagery and included more of the village life. The art form became very influential among the Japanese audiences, Tokio Hasegawa also opened a museum in Japan inspired by Mithila art. Harijan paintings is another sub-involved Mithali artists standing up for themselves, articulating the meaning in their own languages. The development of technology has further helped in people learning art form, some of the artists live in big cities of India in the present day. The

art has successfully been preserved in its original form through support from the local communities. The paintings are also used as a method of protest to prevent majority of the country believes in the Hindu deities, Madhubani paintings of mythological characters on the trees prevent people from cutting down the trees (Kaushik, 2019). The art form has transformed and become a household convey strong social messages in an effective manner.



Figure 4: Madhubani Paintings depicted on walls
(Source: Kaushik, 2019)

Diverse Tapestry of Warli Art- Warli painting is tribal in nature and originated in Maharashtra by tribal people. Despite being one of the oldest forms of art, this has not gained significant interest outside India. In the present day, this form of art can be found in Dahanu, Talasari, Jawhar, Palghar, Mokhada, and have been successful in preserving this ancient form of art because they have rejected much of the contemporary ways of living of the modern Indian culture (Medium, 2019). The clay huts of these tribal people are generally used as the canvas, farming is the main source of living for these people, large influence of mother nature can be seen in their art. Warli art is a way of living for the people, as they highlight the traditions, cultural practices and life activities of the Warli people.

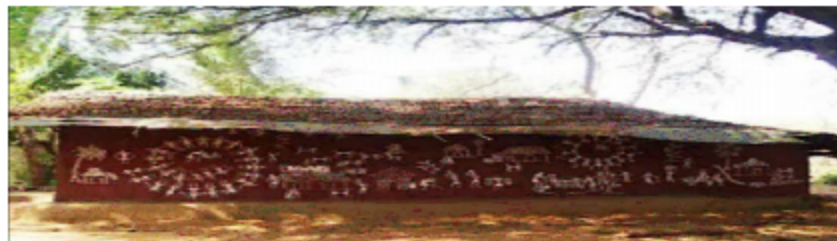


Figure 5: Warli Art on a Mud House
(Source: Medium, 2019)

Similar to cave paintings of early humans, these Warli paintings share a story of enigmatic appeal. Despite being simple, the art incorporates intricate flowers, rituals and hunting scenes. The local people of Maharashtra have grown a sentiment towards the art, rural schools and houses are decorated with these art forms, and the paintings have a raw appeal to them. The Back to this form of art even more (Medium, 2019). Warli people live simplistic lives and the influence of this can be seen in their paintings, the paintings and their rich history reminds society about the simple pleasures of life. Attempts have been made to keep this form of art alive, in 2016 A group of Japanese individuals adopted the Ganjad Village, and constructed huts with cow dung, mud and bamboo in an attempt to keep the traditions alive. When Warli art was first discovered, it had created a huge impact on people, BhaskarKulkarni was one of the first people to appreciate the art and encourage the indigenous people to practice their art on paper rather than on their walls (Mohan, 2022). These monosyllabic popular among the people due to their close connections with land and nature.



Figure 6: Warli Lifestyle and Marriage Ceremony represented through Art
(Source: MUNDHE, 2023)



Traditionally the Warli paintings were made by mixing rice flour other forms of colour were added, the Warli tribal communities believe in living in harmony with nature this is reflected further in their community lifestyles. As the modern age is constantly changing, Warli art has also adapted to the demands of the consumers, Warli paintings are being incorporated into many commercial items to sustain the paintings (MUNDHE, 2023). The tribal people have profound love and respect for nature and everything it provides, the artists from the Thane district, in particular, have a major role in making the paintings more popular, the paintings of Warli are made in an exquisite and rhythmical style, the main attraction being the Tarpa dance. The celestial bodies are depicted by round shapes, while the mountains are shown with triangles, every aspect of life has a specific shape and meaning, making this art form unique, the scenes of farming, agriculture, hunting and fishing serve as the foundation for the people.

Warli art believes in equality, both men, women and even children are involved in the painting procedure, and the regular village life is highlighted without any form of exaggeration. The tribal artisans of the Warli origins have created the art form with their bare hands and natural tools, through more development of their craft and newer technologies, the paintings can be made prosperous, and they can also help them gain international status. The paintings serve as a visual representation of the close-knit community of the Warli people. The rich heritage and traditions of the people are preserved through art for future generations. The paintings have intricate decorations, formulaic designs and aesthetic appeal that make the art prosperous (MUNDHE, 2023). It is important to recognize the lesser-known art forms of India, through government and communal support, these art forms can get more recognition and help reach the global level. Fear of losing the original concept of the Warli art has been a major concern, valuing the culture and allowing the people to practice their beliefs in peace.

Discussion- The research has presented detailed accounts of both of the art forms, the Madhubani paintings in particular incorporate many social scenes that are thought-provoking. The paintings show various aspects of life that are gratifying and pleasing. The name Madhubani has been derived from the word madhu which means honey, while ban means forest, suggesting a land filled with honey or prosperity. The paintings show both the religious beliefs of the people as well as the daily ceremonies. The name Warli comes from warlis tribes living in the Thane district of Maharashtra. One of the most striking features of the Madhubani paintings is that these are typically done by women, they draw inspiration from tales of Mahabharata and Ramayana, and the overall theme that encompasses these factors are the ideas about unconditional surrender and thankfulness to god (Sharma, 2015). In the 20th century, following an earthquake the inner carvings of houses were revealed which allowed this art form to gain traction and become popular around the world. The women who make Mithila art are now recognized even more, attracting tourists to collect folk art.

Warli art on the other hand is not as popular on the global spectrum as Madhubani, however, the artwork is still loved and adored within the Indian subcontinent. The artwork can be traced back 3000 years to the Neolithic period, some of the characteristics share common traits with cave paintings, such as basic graphic vocabulary of circles being used for celestial figures, and triangles presenting mountains. The symbol of the square is a human invention and is closely related to the idea of an enclosure or a piece of land. The tribal people generally use this form of painting to decorate their houses, however, the success of Warli's paintings has made the idea commercial with representation of this art being found on many day to day objects (Sharma, 2015). The paintings are carried out beautifully, showing cave paintings and human fighting scenes that are integral parts of the tribal culture.

Conclusion- As concluding remarks for the present article, it can be seen that India has a rich traditional heritage that needs to be preserved to remember the past. The art forms created and sustained by the ancient Indians have created magnificence, the folk paintings studied in this section show the aesthetic aspect of the drawings. The study shows the importance of recognition of these art forms to save them from extinction as globalization continues to alter people's beliefs and traditions. Madhubani and Warli's art has been analysed critically within the research to show the unique nature of both the art forms and the methods which the rural and tribal communities have used for generations to protect the art forms. Government support can help increase the demand for these artworks and paintings, helping the communities gain global exposure.

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